

SUBJECT: Establishing a pilot work program for certain state-jail felony defendants

COMMITTEE: Corrections — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — White, Allen, S. Davis, Romero, Sanford, Schaefer, Tinderholt
0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Raymon Roberts, DeWayne Street, Traci Berry, Goodwill Central Texas; Rodney Thompson, Texas Probation Association; Michael Haugen, Texas Public Policy Foundation; Zenobia Joseph; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Katy Reagan, Alliance for Safety and Justice; Nicholas Hudson, American Civil Liberties Union of Texas; Lauren Johnson, Austin Travis County Reentry Roundtable, Texas Inmate Families Association; Kathryn Freeman, Christian Life Commission; Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter; Josiah Neeley, R Street Institute; Cathy DeWitt, Texas Association of Business; Lori Henning, Texas Association of Goodwills; Trey Owens and Douglas Smith, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition)

Against — None

On — Bryan Collier, Texas Department of Criminal Justice

BACKGROUND: Some observers have noted that recidivism rates among state jail populations are particularly high and that employment and life-skills training can help reduce the likelihood that a person will re-offend.

DIGEST: CSHB 3130 would require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) by September 1, 2019, to develop a pilot program to provide educational and vocational training, employment, and reentry services to defendants placed on community supervision and sentenced to confinement in a state-jail felony facility. A defendant convicted at any time of an offense against a person would be ineligible for the program.

After consulting with interested parties, TDCJ would choose up to four

locations across that varied in geographic region and population size where the program would operate. The department would consider whether risks and needs assessments were generally conducted before sentencing in a particular location, and the degree to which local judges supported the pilot program.

The bill would require TDCJ to request proposals for program services from public and private entities. The pilot program would consist of about 180 days of employment-related services based on the defendant's vocational goals. Defendants would receive training and be employed by the service provider during an initial period, after which placement services would help the defendant find employment. If applicable, the provider also would help the defendant obtain a high school diploma or industry certification. Life-skills training, counseling, and mental health services also would be available.

The pilot program would be limited to 45 defendants per quarter per location. TDCJ would pay providers at least \$40 per day for each participant.

The bill would allow a judge assessing a punishment in a state-jail felony case to suspend the imposition of the sentence and place the defendant on community supervision for up to 270 days on the condition that the defendant:

- submit at the beginning of term of community supervision to be confined in a state-jail facility for no more than 90 days; and
- participate in the education and vocational training pilot program.

Defendants would be required to participate fully in the program, and failure to do so could result in a revocation.

A risk and needs assessment or similar evaluation of the defendant's prior criminal history would have to be conducted before a defendant could be placed on community supervision. The judge would have to credit against the time the defendant was required to serve the days the defendant served

in a county jail from arrest until sentencing.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017, and would apply only to defendants sentenced to a state jail on or after September 1, 2019.

NOTES:

A companion bill, SB 1011 by Huffman, was referred to the Senate Criminal Justice Committee on March 6.

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have an estimated negative impact of \$2.4 million to general revenue beginning in fiscal 2020-21.